

Testimony of Nia Holston, Black Student Alliance, Yale College

S.B. No 453, An Act Concerning Certificates of Relief from Barriers Resulting from
Conviction of a Crime

Judiciary Committee

March 23, 2012

My name is Nia Holston, and I am a sophomore at Yale University. I am the Political Action Chair for the Black Student Alliance at Yale, and we express our voice in support for S.B. No 453, An Act Concerning Certificates of Relief from Barriers Resulting from Conviction of a Crime.

We do so out of a strong conviction that reforms are necessary to the current provisional pardons program. This year, BSAY developed a campus wide campaign, entitled, *First Steps, Second Chances*. The purpose of the campaign, which focuses on reentry, as well as issues within the criminal justice system, is to combine advocacy and mentoring to produce reform. One particular program that resulted from the campaign is the creation of a pardons clinic under the direction of Amy Meek, Director of the New Haven Prison Reentry Initiative. At the clinic, which happens biweekly, persons seeking pardons come in to receive help in filling out the extensive application. Whenever we talk about the differences between full expungement pardons, and provisional pardons, our clients become confused and frustrated. Some become so frustrated, in fact, that they decide to give up on the entire process. This is not how the program should run. Our clients will truly benefit from a clarification of the provisional pardons process. We reiterate our support for this bill, and we hope this change is enacted as fast as possible.